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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 421

By DeBerry L

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Mr. Oney Joseph Naifeh
of Covington.

WHEREAS, this General Assembly was deeply saddened to learn of the loss of Mr. Oney Joseph Naifeh, father of the Honorable House Speaker Jimmy Naifeh, and a highly respected businessman and beloved figure in the Covington community; and

WHEREAS, Oney Joseph Naifeh was born in Lebanon in 1907, the son of the late Joseph S. and Sayoud Naifeh. After the death of their mother when Mr. Naifeh was only ten years old, he and a brother came to this country to join their father, who had previously immigrated arrived earlier; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Naifeh arrived in the United States at Ellis Island, and subsequently traveled by train to Fulton, Kentucky, where he worked as a peddler before settling in Covington and entering the grocery business; and

WHEREAS, having already learned to speak English, Oney Naifeh completed five school grades in two years; he graduated from the Memphis Business College prior to assuming responsibility for the grocery store, which he expanded into a wholesale grocery operation, real estate firm and other business interests; and

WHEREAS, "Mr. Oney," as he was affectionately known by the people of Covington and Tipton County, developed a unique friendship with the citizens of his community, and always made it his business to be nice to people and to extend a helping hand to those in need; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Oney had a deep and abiding love for his adopted country and served his nation in the U.S. armed forces during World War II. His appreciation for the contributions of veterans and their families to the causes of this country led to Mr. Oney's playing a prominent role in fundraising efforts to construct the Tipton County Museum, Veterans' Memorial and Nature Center; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Oney was deeply involved in his community, and served with probity on the Covington Board of Aldermen from 1951-67, as a founding member of the Covington Country Club, and as a member of the Lions Club, the Jesters and the Shrine. He was also a member of the American Legion and the Tipton County Veterans' Association; and

WHEREAS, he served with distinction on the Board of First State Bank of Covington for forty years, and was frequently present at the various family enterprises, even in his later years; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Oney was perhaps best known for the Naifeh Coon Supper, which he founded in 1945, as an annual political picnic named for the meat served, racoons being readily available due to the popularity of the sport of coon hunting in West Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, attendance at the Coon Supper has become an irresistible draw to the politically-inclined in Tennessee, particularly in West Tennessee, where the good people of Covington and Tipton County have an opportunity to meet political figures from throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, Oney Naifeh was an active and longtime communicant at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, where he faithfully served his Lord and Savior for many years; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Naifeh enjoyed the love and support of his devoted wife, Adele Hamra Naifeh, who preceeded him in death, and was the loving father of sons Jimmy, Joe, Jr., and

Johnny; Mr. Oney was also the proud grandfather of six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Oney's life of distinguished public service, compassion for humanity, and love of family stands as a model for all of us to emulate; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause in its deliberations to honor the life of this remarkable Tennessean, who lived to fulfill the American dream, and whose contributions will not soon be forgotten; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we express our profound sorrow at the death of Oney Joseph Naifeh, remembering with fondness his life of purpose and commitment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we offer our heartfelt condolences to the family and many friends of Mr. Naifeh.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.